



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 168

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2022

No. 175

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, who brings a rich harvest with Your footsteps, we praise Your Name and celebrate Your goodness. Lord, remind us that, without Your help, there is no national security. May we focus less on what we can accomplish and more on Your prevailing providence.

Send Your peace into the hearts of our Senators. Lord, take away distracting worries and fill them with faith. Cleanse them from any bitter or unforgiving spirit as You give them contentment in serving You and this great Nation.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Maria del R. Antongiorgi-Jordan, of Puerto Rico, to be United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER
The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF THE TOPS
SUPERMARKET SHOOTING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I begin the substance of my remarks, today the people of Buffalo, NY, observe a somber remembrance: 6 months ago to the day that 10 New Yorkers were killed in a terrible shooting at the Tops Supermarket on Jefferson Avenue. A few moments ago, the city of Buffalo held a moment of silence to honor those killed and those wounded, and we joined with them in prayer and remembrance.

And today, because gun violence is still all too much with us, we hold in our hearts everyone at the University of Virginia where, last night, three students were tragically killed in a shooting on campus. Our condolences go out to the families of those lost, as well as to everyone in Charlottesville who is grieving today.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS AND THE 117TH CONGRESS

Now, Madam President, let me be the first to welcome you and all my colleagues back to the U.S. Senate. There is a lot to do, a lot to say, and I am glad to be back here on the floor with my colleagues to continue serving the American people. I want to thank the voters of New York, who have elected me for a fifth term—the first Senator ever from New York to have five terms—and I promise the people of New York that I will serve you as diligently and work just as hard for you as I have in the previous years. So thank you for the faith that you have shown in me.

And, Madam President, last Tuesday, Americans made their voices heard in one of the most remarkable midterm elections in modern history. With our democracy at stake, with our fundamental liberties on the line, and with a clear choice between moving America forward or holding it back, the American people spoke loud and clear. Democrats will retain the majority in the Senate, and House Democrats, under the leadership of Speaker PELOSI, defied precedent and remain within striking distance of defending their majority as well. The election was a great win for the Democratic Party but, more importantly, a great win for the American people.

And let me say this. Two things happened, Madam President, in the last 2 years. First, this Senate and this Congress passed a huge agenda, the most comprehensive agenda affecting and helping American families that has occurred in decades. Second, Democrats won the elections here in the Senate and many in the House. Those two statements are directly related. Because Democrats had a strong agenda here and did things for the American people, we won. And despite the negativity and divisiveness, the threats of violence and even the violence itself that occurred with MAGA Republicanism dominating the country, the American people stepped back from the

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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precipice and chose progress and getting things done, rather than the voices of divisiveness, nastiness, and lack of complete truth and honor. So those two things are definitely related.

First, let's talk about some of the things we got done. It was an incredible, incredible 2 years. The list is a long one: the most significant bipartisan infrastructure bill in decades, making sure that millions of new, good jobs will occur—with union labor, I am proud to say—employing tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of people in good working jobs.

We reformed the post office for the first time in a very long time. We dealt with the issue of chips that were made overseas, and now we have said to the American people: We are going to make them here, creating thousands and thousands of good-paying jobs, and we are going to not let any country—China or any other, Germany—take away that dominance. We have developed the chips here. We are going to make them here.

We dealt with our veterans who were exposed to toxins from burn pits. And when the VA wouldn't help them, we said the VA must. We dealt with climate in the IRA, for the first time ever, and we will reduce the amount of carbon flowing into our atmosphere by 2030 by 40 percent. In the same bill, we took on the prescription drug companies, and we are getting a \$35 price for insulin on Medicare and lowering prices of drugs for so many millions of Americans on many other drugs, starting as early as next year, with the cap of \$2,000 that anyone must pay.

We increased healthcare. We expanded the ACA, making healthcare less expensive for many and dealing with so many other healthcare issues, to the benefit of the American people.

So it was a huge agenda, and despite what some of the pundits and prognosticators say, that is what the American people wanted.

How did we win the election? Because we stuck to that agenda.

And on the other side, what we saw from MAGA Republicans was, first, the Big Lie—the Big Lie—that said that the election was stolen. It was a lie, plain and simple, but MAGA Republicans, so many in this Chamber, repeated that lie over and over again.

And, Madam President, if one political party or a large group of people abandon the view that the elections are on the level, that is the beginning of the end of our democracy.

Not only did we see the Big Lie, but we saw nastiness, divisiveness, threats of violence, and even violence itself, not only on January 6 but often directed at the people running our elections. These are nice, hard-working people. All they want to do is do their job and make sure the votes are counted properly, and they get threatened.

And what bothered the American people even more than this was the fact that too many Republican leaders either condoned the violence or even

aided and abetted the threats of violence. It was outrageous, but lots of people saw right through it—and not just Democrats. Large numbers of Republicans said: This new MAGA Republican Party is not the party of Ronald Reagan, not the party of the Bushes; it is a different party, and I can't countenance it.

And that is why so many of them voted for Democratic candidates who were paying attention to the specific issues—nondismissive, not incendiary, just helping people. And that is why, I believe, we won the election.

So where do we go from here, Madam President?

Well, I will say one more thing. The midterms are not over. Obviously, there is an election in Georgia, and once again we have the contrast. Senator WARNOCK is a man dedicated to service. He first served people in the ministry, and he still is the minister, the pastor, of one of the most famous and revered pulpits in the entire country, in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, the old pulpit of Martin Luther King, Jr. But he became a Senator, and that devotion to service continued.

He was one of our leaders in establishing a \$35 cap on insulin for tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of Georgians and millions of Americans, the elderly, who needed that insulin. And the drug companies, even though it is not a patented drug, were charging \$600, \$700, \$800 a month. He helped with healthcare.

He helped get \$4 billion for Black farmers, who had been discriminated against for decades.

And so I believe this election—this new election in Georgia—will be like the election that we have had last Tuesday: The candidate who is trying to help people, the candidate who is not being divisive and incendiary, will win: RAPHAEL WARNOCK.

Now, where should we go in the next 2 years? I hope this Chamber, for the good of the American people, will continue on its record of getting bipartisan things done. Of the six major bills we passed in June and July and early August, five were bipartisan. And our hierarchy as Democrats is to work on a bipartisan basis whenever we can, and we showed we were able to.

There are times when we can't get our Republicans to join us. None of them wanted to go against Big Pharma, and we had to pass prescription drugs ourselves. None of them wanted to go against Big Oil; so we had to pass climate change by ourselves. But we got a lot of bipartisan things done.

And my hope for America, for the sake of America—this is a swirling world, and people are not happy with their circumstances; they want help—is that this Senate in the next 2 years, under the leadership of this caucus, will rise to that occasion. And I say to my Democratic colleagues, let us proceed in the next 2 years by putting them first and getting things done,

even if we have to compromise. We may not accomplish everything we want, but if we can get real things done, that will measure how good a Congress we can be.

The guns bill that we did under Senator MURPHY's leadership last summer is an example. Almost every one of us on this side of the aisle is for universal background checks. I am the author of the Brady law. I care a lot about it. We couldn't get that, but we got some significant changes. We fought the NRA, and young people—18 years old—will not automatically be able to go into a gun store and buy an assault rifle, as the horrible perpetrators of the crimes in Buffalo and Uvalde had done.

And once we got this done, even though we didn't get everything we wanted, the American people were elated. They said: They finally broke the logjam and got something done. For our side, that ought to be a motto: Get it done. Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. The American people want us to make their lives better and help them. Speeches won't do it. Putting down just a bill that has everything we want that fails won't do it. Getting it done will.

I say to my Republican colleagues, including Leader MCCONNELL, work with us. Work with us. We are willing to work with you to get things done, as the past Senate has shown. Let's sit down and talk about how we can come together. That is what we need to do.

And I say to my Republican colleagues, embracing the MAGA way of divisiveness, nastiness, negativity, without constructive compromise—that is how Donald Trump wanted it, and some of our colleagues follow him—that will be a disaster. That will be wrong. It will be bad for America, but it will also be bad for the Republican Party because these elections have shown that the MAGA Republican way is not where the American people want to be. The election of 2016 showed it. The election of 2018 showed it. The election of 2020 showed it. And this election, more than ever, shows it because no one thought Democrats would succeed in the election because we were climbing uphill. But the combination of us actually accomplishing things and focusing on those things in our campaigns and the fact of the distaste that a majority of Americans have for the MAGA Republican way of intransigence, divisiveness, nastiness, and tossing incendiary language over the wall, is not going to succeed.

So we can have a great, great 2 years if we work together, and I am urging Leader MCCONNELL to work with us. I am urging the hopefully large group of non-MAGA Republicans on the other side to work with us so we can get things done.

Now, finally, I want to thank a few people in the aftermath of this election. First, I want to thank President Biden for his leadership, for working with us on climate change to lowering costs for families on drugs, to delivering action on student debt. And, by

the way, I forgot to add that we focused on our younger generation as well. And two issues they cared about most were climate and student debt. We delivered on both. President Biden took great leadership on so many of these issues and delivered on so many. So I want to thank him for his leadership. He helped set this bold agenda that we in the Senate were proud to hone and enact.

I want to welcome our two new colleagues to the Senate on our side of the aisle: PETER WELCH of Vermont and John Fetterman of Pennsylvania. I have had a chance to talk to them over the phone before and after their victories, and they will be excellent Senators.

And I want to thank all of those who knocked on doors, who volunteered, who said: This democracy should not be left to others; I must be involved. Thank you. All of that hard work has produced a very good result, at least in my opinion, last Tuesday.

So the election of 2022 is approaching the end, but our obligation to serve the American people continues. Let us move forward with the same spirit of cooperation and compromise that made the 117th Congress one of the most successful in recent history. If we do it, it will be good for Democratic Senators, it will be good for Republican Senators, but, most of all, it will be good for this grand experiment in democracy: the United States of America and its people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, last week's midterm elections reaffirmed something that has been clear for a number of years: When it comes to politics and to policy, we are a closely divided nation.

For the third straight election, our closely divided nation saw a closely fought election go all the way down to the wire. And as the dust settles, for the third straight time, the American people have chosen a very closely divided government.

Though several races for the House of Representatives remain uncalled, it appears the likeliest outcome would mean the American people have put a stop to 2 years of Democrats' disastrous one-party government and placed the House in Republican hands.

Senate Republicans have spent 2 years working to check and balance reckless policies; it will be an outstanding thing for the country to have a set of new reinforcements arriving on the other side of the Capitol.

Now, while this election underscored some of our country's close divisions, it also highlighted areas where the people are speaking overwhelmingly with one voice. The American people are not divided over what Democrats' reckless policy decisions have done to our economy and to their families' budgets. Exit polls show three-quarters of voters say the economy they are facing is "poor" or "not good."

Americans are not divided over whether the current trends in inflation, crime, open borders, and drug addiction are acceptable outcomes for the greatest country in the history of the world; everyone knows they are not.

And Americans are not especially closely divided about whether they want President Biden to keep governing like he has been or actually change course. At this point in their presidencies, every one of the last 13 Presidents dating back to Truman had higher approval ratings than the Biden administration.

One State where Democrats' policy failures have hit especially hard is the State of Georgia. Georgia families have seen cumulative inflation of 14.7 percent since January of 2021. Both of their Senators cast the deciding vote to rubberstamp the spending that made that happen. Now households in the Peach State are paying a hidden Democratic inflation tax that adds up to thousands of extra dollars per year.

The nationwide breakdown in law and order has hit Georgia hard as well. The city of Atlanta now has per capita rates of homicide and assault that are even actually worse than Chicago.

And the people of Georgia saw their State attacked, called racist, called Jim Crow 2.0 by the sitting President of the United States, and boycotted by major corporations over a voting law that just facilitated—listen to this—historic ballot access, record turnout, and low wait times for Georgia voters.

So where do Georgia taxpayers and small businesses go to get their money back after the liberal smear campaign that led to the boycotts? But the day after the election, President Biden took to the podium and triumphantly promised that he plans to learn no lessons and change nothing at all. Here was the quote:

I'm not going to change the direction.

Thirteen-plus percent inflation over 2 years, historic levels of dissatisfaction at Americans' kitchen tables, and President Biden says he will keep doing precisely what he has been doing: more inflation, more crime, more chaos, more open borders.

If Washington Democrats do not want to pivot to sanity and common sense, if they will not help us address the ways their policies are hurting families, they will encounter stiff resistance from the sizable Senate Republican Conference that half the country has elected to be their voice, to be their champions, to fight for them.

So to sum it up, we are going to fight hard for the American families this administration is leaving behind.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The senior Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, before I make any remarks in the Senate, I want to make remarks of a specific and personal nature to the Presiding Officer. The last time we were together was election night. And it was a wonderful night for you, for your family, and for the State of Illinois. Your victory was an amazing achievement, but your whole life has been an amazing achievement. And I particularly will remember when Brian brought the girls up to the stage, and they jumped all over their mom in her wheelchair. It was something that made the news and should have. It was a wonderful moment for you and your family. But it was a wonderful moment in American politics.

Your re-election in the State of Illinois was my No. 1 priority. And I didn't have to work as hard as I thought I would because they love you, and it showed in the vote. So congratulations to the Presiding Officer.

Madam President, in the fall of 1862, President Abraham Lincoln sent his second annual message to Congress. The Civil War was raging, and our Nation was really uncertain as to its future.

In the midst of what Lincoln called this "fiery trial," he called on Congress to do something that was remarkable: to assure the freedom of every American, including the nearly 4 million Black Americans living in bondage. President Lincoln said this was the only way to "save . . . the last best hope of earth," American democracy.

Last Tuesday, 160 years later, Americans across the country stood up, went to the polls, and did their part, in their time, to save the last best hope of earth. They voted to protect our fundamental freedoms and to preserve our democracy.

One of those voters was a young woman in our State named Lauren. She is a student at the University of Illinois in Champaign. The students at the university once again had to wait for hours in line. People were bringing pizzas to sustain them during their trial of waiting to vote. It worked. They voted in big numbers. And Lauren was one of them.

While she was waiting in line, a reporter with the Illinois Student Newsroom asked her, "Why, why did you come out here and vote?"

She said:

I was voting based on women's rights in terms of candidates who were supporting women's choice. . . . It's important—as a student—as a young person to come out and vote for issues that I care about.

Thankfully, Lauren wasn't alone. In this year's election, young voters continued a trend that began in 2018 and 2020: They turned out in record numbers. They realized it is the responsibility of their generation to do a better job than our generation and to keep democracy alive.